

**City of Kingston Arts Commission
Meeting - Thursday, June 9, 2016 – 4:30 p.m.
City Hall**

MINUTES

Attendance

Commission members in attendance were: Micah Blumenthal, Ruth Ann Devitt-Frank, Richard Frumess, Lara Giordano, Susie Linn, Linda Marston-Reid and Ward Mintz.

Absent: Pablo Shine, Bill Carey, Alderman, 5th Ward (Common Council liaison)

Excused: Anne Bailey

Guests: Jack Brown, Friends of Historic Kingston; Tom Kiernan, Senate House; Jeff Miller, Rehr Center; Gary Pennock

Call to Order

RF called the meeting to order at 4:35.

May Minutes

Ward moved to approve the May meeting minutes, Richard seconded, and all agreed.

Arts Commission Email Contacts

Eric Tacti has set the KAC email address up. All Commission members will receive messages and Lara and Ruth Ann will be responsible for responding to emails.

Meeting Guests

Going forward Richard will send out meeting confirmations to prospective guests.

This week's guests were invited to join the meeting in order to learn about the Arts Commission and fill the Commission members in about their organizations and if/how they think the Commission could support them.

Richard first summarized the Arts Commission's mission for the guests, stating that one main purpose is to create a forum in which divergent groups can convene and share information.

Jeff Miller/Rehr Center - Jeff explained the Center, which was originally a Jewish Bakery (now owned by the Jewish Federation), came out of a project specifically about Jewish Immigrants to Kingston. Organizers saw the potential the Center has to represent all immigrants.

He went on to explain that the Rehr Center is working to increase historic/heritage tourism. His goal in the coming year is to launch a music series that is both entertaining and educational

and has a focus on immigrant culture and music. As Rehr is still under construction, the performances will take place at ASK, which Rehr has previously used.

Jeff also mentioned that he hopes the Rehr Center construction will be completed in time to be open with regular weekend hours next summer. At a minimum, he needs at least the storefront, gallery and upstairs space to be completed. The schedule depends on building safety approvals and building the volunteer base. He has one volunteer who has offered to build the program. Linda also recommended Volunteer Match. Completing the building will also allow him to focus on the membership program.

Other points:

- Perception of Community: when he was a newcomer, Jeff found Kingston's urban quality appealing because it's easy to know people and there is an interesting mix of cultures. Businesses and people do well together, but in terms of the larger picture, people don't intermingle. He would like to see more intermingling without people feeling self-conscious about their own ethnicity/background. Also mentioned that the town is at times set in its ways.
- Partners: ASK, Jewish Federation, Maritime Museum, Friends of Historic Kingston
- Calendar: Jeff would like to see a central events calendar set in place because it will help increase lines of communication between organizations and help foster additional cooperation.

Tom Kiernan/ Senate House – Tom has an extensive background in managing historic sites and has been with the Senate House for five years. The Senate House is a state entity that is overseen by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (Peebles Island offices). The Friends of the Senate House is a non-profit group that fundraises for educational outreach activities and exhibitions. There are five year-round staff. Paid tour guides work on a seasonal basis.

Tom's job focus has been to develop the events program. During his tenure, the Senate House began to play a significant role in the annual Snowflake Festival and now conducts one major activity every month. The History Camp takes place every summer, and this fall the House will host a 17th Century Stockade exhibit. These activities have helped increase in tourist traffic to Uptown.

Tom would like to do more outreach activities to civic and other organizations. In addition to bringing school groups to the site, he would like to develop an in-school education program.

Other points:

- Perception of Community: Jeff sees Kingston as a close-knit community in which he has seen positive change taking place since he began at the Senate House. He sees progress continuing in Uptown\

Jack Brown/Friends of Historic Kingston – Jack is President of the Board. He explained that the Friends of Historic Kingston is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. The organization was originally formed in reaction to the urban renewal movement in the 1960s and the destruction of neighborhoods that began to take place at that time.

Friends of Historic Kingston owns the Fred Johnston Museum, the adjacent building, the Sharp Cemetery, and the 18th Century Frog Alley ruin. Jane Keller is the full-time paid director and she has one part-time staff person. The Board's job is to support Jane.

Friends of Historic Kingston oversees the annual Clean Sweep, the Scarecrow event, walking tours of both the Stockade District and the Rondout, and local cemeteries. They have seen interest and participation in all of these events increase in recent years.

Significant projects Friends would like to see include documentation of the City's bluestone and cobblestone structure, a factory tour, Midtown tour, establishment of a vision for Frog Alley.

Other points:

- Jack would like to see more collaboration between different organizations. Friends has worked successfully with the HLPC, the Heritage Area Commission, RUPCO, on different projects. He said that the City's Comprehensive Plan brought preservation groups together to make sure preservation is included. All of this cooperation is positive for Friends of Historic Kingston, the city, and all participating groups.

Next Arts Commission Meeting

All agreed to temporarily move the monthly meetings in July, August and September to the first Thursdays at 4:30. We will return to the second Thursdays in October.

The next Arts Commission meeting will take place on **Thursday, July 7 at 4:30 p.m.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:30.